00;00;09;28 - 00;00;40;27

Eric Murphy

I'm Mack Daddy Murphy. Oh, yeah. But I'm also funny. I think. Why is this population so vulnerable is one of the part of this question. I think that communication for a lot of people is challenging. And it's I think it's always hard to say that this is hard to parent. No one wants to say, I don't know what I'm doing.

00;00;45;18 - 00;01;13;10

Courtney Ringstaff

Welcome to Adjusting the Sails, a podcast for parents, caregivers and service providers for Children with Disabilities. I'm your host, Courtney Ring Staff, and this is my co-host, Melina Danko.

Melina Danko

Hi, everyone. We are so glad you've joined us.

Courtney Ringstaff

Melina is the assistant director of communications and marketing at the Center for Excellence in Disabilities and the project director of the West Virginia Family two family Health Information Center.

00;01;14;04 - 00;01;41;06

Host

I am a licensed social worker in Morgantown, West Virginia, and I've created this podcast to be a platform where parents, caregivers and service providers can come together, exchange information, educate one another, and find support and connection through the relatable topic discussions. We cannot change the direction of the wind or the strength of the storm, but together we can adjust the sails.

00;01;44;11 - 00;02;16;29

Eric Murphy

My name is Eric Murphy. I have a master's in community health promotion and community counseling here at the CDC. I am the mental health specialist. I work with the Country Rose Program, but I also do mental health work with people from the community, and those people typically have acute or acquired disability. I work in the aging population, the cognitively disabled and developmental disabled communities, and I work from everything from six years old to right now.

00;02;17;00 - 00;02;20;22

Eric Murphy

My oldest client is probably about 68.

00;02;22;21 - 00;02;54;28

Host

Let's start by talking about gender roles and how gender roles might be impacting one's marriage. And I say this because so often couples are struggling with their distribution of responsibilities in the household. And I suspect that this is even more a problem when that couple is also co-parenting a child with a disability, traditional roles that people feel that the man has to be the provider, he has to be the one that provides for the family.

00;02;55;03 - 00;03;01;07

Host

And your twist is that by supporting your family, you are providing it doesn't have to just be financially.

00;03;01;12 - 00;03;20;25

Eric Murphy

Yes, ma'am. I think you just touched on something that's real for me. You know, I'm a firm believer. If I if I call myself this social construct of what a man is right, then I can express a continuum of emotion. I might say, how can I say that I'm that guy? If I can only express this much of me.

00;03;20;25 - 00;03;41;15

Eric Murphy

So if there's this much in me that only when I get the bacon, I'm a come home and cook it up in a pan and I might even wash the pan afterwards. I am okay with that because if my partner comes home and says, There's nothing for me to do here. Everything is done and I don't want a pat on the back for it because it's our house.

00;03;42;08 - 00;04;00;28

Eric Murphy

The only thing I think inside of my head collect testosterone Bruin is yeah, that's what I do. Don't pat me on the back for that baby. You married a man. If you go home first, I'm quite sure you would do it. So I think that as a man, I don't need to burn myself out and say, I got to do all this stuff.

00;04;00;28 - 00;04;25;21

Eric Murphy

I have all the answers, I don't have the answers, but I can do is be active and not busy. Busy. Busy is just moving around. Like, are you doing something? I'm talking about actually making it happen. Making my environment comfortable. Providing the opportunity for my environment to be unconditional and positive and supportive and appreciative. That's what I can bring to the table stability.

00;04;26;24 - 00;04;46;09

Eric Murphy

So I think that a lot of times the Appalachian men, especially, we have to know that if I say I'm a strong Appalachian man, that only way I go out there in the winter, find the wood, cut the wood down, chop it and make the log cabin. I'm going to put a rug in that joke or two. I might watch some dishes too, but if I got a strong partner, I know my partner and I go, Let me do all that.

00;04;46;27 - 00;05;01;22

Eric Murphy

They're not. We're going to do it together. That's what that's what I think. That's my twist on the Appalachian man. So I got I feel passionate when I said that. I started in my spirit.

00;05;01;22 - 00;05;03;09

Host

I think people are going to want to hear that.

00;05;04;27 - 00;05;18;13

Eric Murphy

It's the truth. I mean, you know, if I'm that guy and you've got to be that guy, if I'm that guy, then why would I fight with you if I'm that guy? If I'm a guy, why would I want you to do if I came home first and you and I'm home with the child, I'm doing all this stuff right?

00;05;19;08 - 00;05;37;08

Eric Murphy

Or better yet, you've been home with the child. And I come home. I need to walk in the house. As you start picking up stuff and clean it up, you know, whether you're washing dishes, do my thing, kiss my wife and baby and just get to go and not talk about it. It just. Hey, how's everything going? Good, good.

00;05;37;14 - 00;05;56;19

Eric Murphy

Get those dishes. Do my thing because I know my partner got to be tired. Got to be tired. And if they're not tired, I still want to provide them with respect, humor, balance. If I'm out of balance, how can I expect you to be an imbalanced man? That's not cool. That's not cool. I played chess a lot, man.

00;05;56;19 - 00;06;20;06

Eric Murphy

I could play chess in my marriage. And I know that, you know, I work this way or my night. You know, I do my thing, but I also like to win. So guess what? I ain't using that chessboard. I'm cheating. I'm a come home at lunch and I'm a clean house. I'm a come home real quick and I'll put a load in the laundry and just make it back to work real quick.

00;06;21;09 - 00;06;44;27

Eric Murphy

Not because I want my wife to be surprised, but because that's what I'm supposed to be doing. Let me make this work light. I'm sorry. I'm feeling real macho when I say that. When we are talking to me about husband and dad, I feel like I am because my job is to be the balance, like to be the support because my wife is lean if my partner's leaning way or I got to dig my foot in so I can we can balance this out.

00;06;45;21 - 00;07;19;11

Eric Murphy

And sometimes that balancing out there, no such thing as 5050. There's no such thing. It might be 95 to 5 for a month or two. So what there's equality in that situation because my partner couldn't do it. I can and I must smile about it. And I think that's the game plan, is to know that this right here is the it's the marathon and embrace the grime and understand this is the journey.

00;07;19;11 - 00;07;24;17

Host

And what other challenges would you say that you're seeing between couples in your work?

00;07;26;07 - 00;07;50;02

Eric Murphy

And one thing that I get from parents a lot of times is that they're lost. I do. I how do I find my way? The other thing is the demise of their intimate relationship with their partner, because they are dealing with the challenges of parenting. They forget the prioritize their life because they're prioritizing resources for their child's life.

00;07;50;08 - 00;08;15;10

Eric Murphy

They're not even prioritizing their child's life. They're prioritizing getting those resources in place. So they're real busy. That busyness, you end up forgetting about your significant other because they become your strong stability, your safe place. But there's no intimacy in that. It's usually a one sided conversation you're telling me about what we're dealing with with our child. I'm listening to you, or I'm overwhelmed and not listening and you feel alone.

00;08;16;19 - 00;08;41;01

Eric Murphy

Why is this population so vulnerable as one of the part of this question? I think that communication for a lot of people is challenging, and I think it's always hard to say that this is hard to parent. I think that nobody wants to say this is difficult. No one wants to say, I don't know what I'm doing. The expectation is you're supposed to know what my child is supposed to be.

00;08;41;01 - 00;09;06;03

Eric Murphy

The shoulds of of child rearing. This should serve of having a child that when you have a child with a disability, those expectations become stressed. The majority of my clients that I've seen, it has been the mother taking care of the child and the father going out to work. I've seen just the opposite also, but I think it causes the same challenge.

00;09;06;10 - 00;09;38;24

Eric Murphy

Someone is out in the world and another person is in the home doing very challenging work. When you have a child who has a disability, you want to enjoy being with your child. You don't want it to seem like this is labor. S work that I have to do with you. You want it to be nurture, but I think that that suppression of the fact that this is difficult and the fact that you don't see it, it can become resentment towards your partner and you don't communicate about it because you don't want to say that.

00;09;38;24 - 00;10;02;13

Eric Murphy

What's going on with me is at parenting. My child is affecting me because you think you're supposed to be to do this. So I think it starts to become a snowball that becomes an avalanche of things. And I think it's steeped in culture and expectation. So who do I tell about? I don't know. Who do I tell that?

00;10;02;13 - 00;10;18;06

Eric Murphy

I'm really feeling scared here. And then I tell my partner this and maybe my partner is a male and my partner tries to fix it for me, but my partner is trying to fix something that he does not understand because he's not here. So then I get resentful because now he's trying to tell me what to do. A subordinate.

00;10;18;06 - 00;10;36;19

Eric Murphy

Maybe I'm doing all the work and that happens just the opposite. Also, I've had men who have told me that my wife does not understand the work that I'm putting in and they want to work later and do some things. But then I'm still here with my child and I'm smiling and having fun with my child and I'm exhausted.

00;10;38;07 - 00;10;46;06

Eric Murphy

So those are some of the things that I end up dealing with a lot of times with my clients here, especially parents of a child with a disability.

00;10;47;14 - 00;10;56;29

Host

When we talk about resentment, how should a person recognize that they're feeling that way towards their partner and maybe catching it early so it doesn't start to impact their intimate relationship?

00;10;57;11 - 00;11;18;22

Eric Murphy

I appreciate that question. I think that one of the ways you can find resentment is when you stop trusting, when you start questioning, when you start questioning the integrity of that person and the integrity of the relationship. What I mean by that is, are they really in it for us? Do they really understand who I am now? They know how hard this is.

00;11;19;00 - 00;11;36;26

Eric Murphy

And because I have no answers for these questions, because of the lack of communication that's happening between us. Resentment starts to happen. But here's a challenge for a lot of times, people forget to train their brain to think differently. So if I thought about this on Monday and I did nothing different, I'm going to think about it on Tuesday.

00;11;38;04 - 00;12;05;09

Eric Murphy

So I had these invasive, redundant thoughts with no intervention. The hardest thing is you could get comfortable with those presenting thoughts. So the hardest thing is to recognize it from the very beginning. Like you don't even recognize it because it's a slippery slope. So how do I recognize it? I think the first thing is, how am I courting my partner or how am I communicating with my partner?

00;12;05;09 - 00;12;31;03

Eric Murphy

Is there any space for us to be together? There are some variables that you can take care of to support the intimacy of your relationship. And when I say intimacy, I am not talking about physical intimacy. I am talking about emotional stability and emotional support. And when you forget that piece, how am I going to relax around you?

00;12;31;26 - 00;12;53;29

Eric Murphy

Because if I can't relax around you, I can't trust you. And then I'll make that become a theme because I have no outside stimulus, because all I'm doing is taking care of my child and you're out there in the world. How do you overcome it? I think you overcome it by and recognizing that something's different here and you cannot allow yourself to get complacent with that.

00;12;53;29 - 00;13;11;18

Eric Murphy

And that sounds like a very easy thing to do. But I got to know that if I love you and I know I have and I said I love you and I'm used to seeing I love you, I better look at what my habits are coming. I got to look at where my sleep in. I got to look at how often am I on social media.

00;13;11;18 - 00;13;37;11

Eric Murphy

My partner's on social media. We're not talking. The hardest part is getting comfortable with that discomfort. So I think you have to be aware like I really, honestly believe that you got to ask yourself often, am I love and my partner and if got it, you got to you got to you got to put it in the routine because if you have a child with a disability, everything that you doing is on a schedule.

00;13;38;19 - 00;13;59;16

Eric Murphy

You've got to schedule in time for you and your partner, for you and you and your partner. Because if you don't do it for you, then you'll start to become codependent and their happiness becomes your happiness. Their sadness becomes your sadness. Instead of you being the stable person when they're dealing with something I say to them being the stable person.

00;13;59;22 - 00;14;08;23

Eric Murphy

When you're dealing with something, everything starts to mesh and then you're stuck in a sea of resentment.

00;14;09;00 - 00;14;46;29

Host

One of the things I think that I have seen over time is in the beginning when a child is born who has complex medical needs, it's a lot of stress and strain on the family. The parents, in the beginning, they're going through a traumatic experience or adjusting to a new life. There's a lot of change going on. And as you've mentioned, grief and before they even get the chance to realize that this has happened, maybe that they have become disconnected, then they're already in that place.

00;14;46;29 - 00;14;58;23

Host

And I think that's why marriages with a child that has a disability are at it even more increased rate for a divorce than others.

00;14;58;23 - 00;15;20;28

Eric Murphy

There are three sides to relationships. There is intimacy, interest. There's commitment in their friendship. I have to make sure to balance out my triangle and my child could be included in the trust and intimacy and commitment and a friendship I have to have with my partner. And I think a lot of times we end up getting into the mechanical mode of things and we forget that I am fine.

00;15;22;11 - 00;15;45;03

Eric Murphy

I forget that my wife is fine and she's frickin beautiful. And we made it. We made this little person out of love and we're going to show them what it looked like and we're going to be passionate about that. And our daughter or our son is going to embrace adversity and grind out and enjoy life because this place is going to be their playground, their mission, what it look like.

00;15;46;11 - 00;16;05;28

Eric Murphy

So I think that one of the things is really taking the courage to say that I, I want to love you, but then understanding what that is. I think that love is unconditional positive regard. I think some people think it's just serve and protect. Unconditional positive regard means I'm going to talk to you. I'm going to I'm going to embrace you.

00;16;05;28 - 00;16;27;26

Eric Murphy

I'm going to be intimate with you. And you are not going to be alone. I am going to be empathetic towards you. And I believe that sometimes we forget with empathy is empathy is not rare. My partner is dealing with something with our child and I'm upset about it. I'm sad and now I'm very upset and my partner is going to have to look out for me on this.

00;16;27;26 - 00;16;53;19

Eric Murphy

That is not empathy. That is hijacking. Empathy is what I am here with you. And I say, I know that's going to be rough, but we got this. It is not hijacking or appropriating someone else's experience or saying that I am hurt because anycast becomes a tit for tat. I got it bad, I got it worse. It becomes the oppression Olympics.

00;16;54;16 - 00;17;12;22

Eric Murphy

And any time you try to one up each other in a marriage, then you're no longer in a collaboration. You're in competition. And competition happens a lot of times when we have a child with a disability, because I want to tell you how bad I got it comparative in how bad you got it. You get to go to work.

00;17;12;22 - 00;17;37;12

Eric Murphy

But now we just talk a mad when I could be kissing you on the face and say, I know the day was a long one and I'm happy I'm here. How do you grow intimacy? You practice and find courage. You're not saying you do what you've never seen. You say, You know what? I'm scared where you walk with fear and you find courage when you fall down because you did it wrong.

00;17;37;12 - 00;17;44;15

Eric Murphy

You get back up, you do it again, you get back up and do again. And that's the you've done enough practice that you know what's up.

00;17;44;15 - 00;18;00;25

Host

I was watching a show and there was like they had their dry erase board and they were there to do list like, you know, we got to do this, this and this. We got to work out. We got to, you know, do this, we got to do this. And one of the things was we had to kiss for one minute or we have to hug for one minute.

00;18;01;08 - 00;18;17;03

Host

And, you know, even though that seems like a strange thing, I think that the things that I have heard in the past is that that physical touch and even just making yourself do it as a part of your to do list, it also helps because there's something to that.

00;18;17;07 - 00;18;38;10

Eric Murphy

And that's one of the biggest things I tell people all the time. You better make a choice to be intimate because of your child. Lisa See that? Lisa See, you kiss your partner. Your child needs to see you smile, not because you triumphed over the system. They need to see you smile because life is enjoyable. And if you don't do that, you them to survive life accident.

00;18;38;10 - 00;18;46;09

Host

That's something that parents can do right in the house. Like just take a minute to hug for one minute like one minute. Same thing this time. But in.

00;18;46;09 - 00;19;09;26

Eric Murphy

The skin, there's nothing like hugging your partner and knowing that this is not a sexual thing, that it is just a true hug and embrace of me. And like you see me because I got a shirt on. You see me, I'm vulnerable with you and you're embracing me. It's no different than being swaddled as a child. It produces oxytocin and serotonin and helps you relax and feel connected.

00;19;11;00 - 00;19;27;24

Eric Murphy

If you notice, a lot of times when parents are caught up, they don't want to like, get off me, don't do I don't want to and they don't know. That's cortisol talking through you because if you hug me, you know, you're going to produce oxytocin and your body is telling you don't do it. That's why I'll be like, No, you're going to hug me.

00;19;28;23 - 00;19;37;04

Eric Murphy

And then they start smelling like, okay. And they know that that smile when they go okay is because they know oxytocin has already started.

00;19;38;11 - 00;19;49;13

Host

Because you think is there a certain amount of time to, you know, because like the first the first like 15 seconds is awkward. But then after like, you know, 30 seconds, you kind of settle into it. It's like, okay.

00;19;49;13 - 00;20;01;18

Eric Murphy

I'll admit it at first to see if contrived because you're training your brain to do something they don't want to do it wants to do or go on Autodrive. So I know I can do that.

00;20;01;18 - 00;20;25;23

Host

Can we talk about the trauma that parents go through when they learn of the disability or when their child is diagnosed? And now there's this stage of grief and dealing with loss and, you know, the trauma of of living every day with a child who has a medical complexity, for example, and how that is going to affect the relationship.

00;20;25;29 - 00;20;46;26

Eric Murphy

So I think that one of the things you said is right. Yeah, I think is a trauma for us. It is not what I expected. What happens a lot of times is we have an expectation of this healthy, loving child. But I don't really know that and I don't know where that expectation came from. I hope that I have this child that's able.

00;20;47;13 - 00;21;12;23

Eric Murphy

But then I have to think what is able me what is able? What am I talking about? So I think that the trauma that you're speaking of comes from having unmet expectations. And then you go through grief and I could give you the grief cycle, shock, denial, blah, blah, blah. But let's keep it simple. Change plus loss equals grief, which changed my expectation.

00;21;12;23 - 00;21;36;09

Eric Murphy

Would I lose what I thought I was going to have? So then I go through grief. You know, the hardest part about that is my partner's my safe place because we're not communicating about the fact that the only reason I'm talking crazy in front of you or to you is because you are my safe place. And I'm scared and I'm worried and I got to say something.

00;21;36;28 - 00;21;55;26

Eric Murphy

And you, the person I know got me, you got my back. But it don't come off like that. It comes off like you treat me crazy. And it's only because we haven't communicated about it. The trauma that we're both going through because we can't say it. I can't say a child like I wanted it to. You can say that.

00;21;56;15 - 00;22;24;05

Eric Murphy

So because it's a secret going on, it festers. Instead of me saying, we're going to leave our child, we are here. It's on. We got a baby. I'm happy. God gave us this. We have this. We have each other. It's there we go. What do you think? People don't think? What do we do wrong? How do we mess this up?

00;22;24;05 - 00;22;47;17

Eric Murphy

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Not realizing that this happens, people don't expect it to be them and now you just develop some new tools. First they become coping mechanisms, and then after a while they become loved mechanisms. At first you are unconsciously incompetent. You have no idea what you're doing. And if you are a parent, you think he's supposed to.

00;22;47;17 - 00;23;08;20

Eric Murphy

No, I read Dr. Spock. I'm supposed to know. And then you become consciously incompetent. I have no idea what I'm doing, and I know it. And then you become consciously competent. I have some tools. I went to the Center for Excellence in Disabilities. I talked to some people. I got some stuff to understand. It is not a hundred yards.

00;23;08;20 - 00;23;14;04

Eric Murphy

It is not 100 yard dash. It is a marathon and you learn to enjoy the marathon.

00;23;15;25 - 00;23;26;06

Host

And are these marriages strengthened or weakened when parents are experience thing like life or death types of diagnoses or situations with their child.

00;23;27;10 - 00;23;51;01

Eric Murphy

It typically that is strengthened it it becomes a trauma bond. A trauma bond is codependent. I would tell you that wedding what can happen in those situations. We can realize how resilient we are. We can realize that we are have a partnership. We can realize that we can try to be triumphant over anything, especially if we put our minds together and share what our thoughts are.

00;23;51;01 - 00;24;04;16

Eric Murphy

In other words, I don't want to be a leader in this. I want to be a member of the tribe, and we got to figure this out and enjoy our success. And we're going to realize that we empowered ourself, that we have the capacity to be great.

00;24;05;27 - 00;24;43;15

Host

At some point, a person can choose to get out of this rut and just accept where they are and life. And when that mindset changes, then that's when things start to become enjoyable. But sometimes figuring that out. So what are some specific little things that someone can do to slowly start to change that mindset because they can't go out and go to a yoga class or, you know, maybe they can't get out of the house because they don't have a setter or a date night.

00;24;43;25 - 00;24;47;09

Host

So what are some some things that are easy to implement?

00;24;48;03 - 00;25;13;10

Eric Murphy

Easy stuff. When my partner gets home, we both take off our work clothes and we clean up the house together. We clear Paris together, and we make it fun. We're going to accomplish something together. That's one thing. And giving each other permission to do nothing when we put our child to bed. Let's just stop thinking for a minute.

00;25;13;10 - 00;25;36;11

Eric Murphy

If nature bathing, it's walking outside and seeing how many colors of green you see fun bathing you can have social bathing. And what that is, is being in that environment, diving into nature and just walking and just hearing the sounds. Listen, looking at the colors, not thinking about anything other than what you see. The same thing with social going to the mall and just watching people.

00;25;37;28 - 00;25;55;24

Host

I like this concept because these parents cannot on a whim just leave their home, but they can probably carve out 5 minutes to sit on their porch and observe or take in nature as a way to kind of escape and get away mentally.

00;25;56;05 - 00;26;18;28

Eric Murphy

Yes. And also there's a book I have called The Zen of Motorcycle Repair. I, I am a firm believer in the Zen of clean in my house. And that sounds so ridiculous. But when you get in the moment of enjoying what you're doing, you're in that moment. And it's sometimes sometimes it's about taking the mundane and making it pleasurable.

00;26;19;08 - 00;26;40;24

Eric Murphy

Get out there and have fun. Here's something that you got to do. Your life is really serious. When you have a child with complex medical issues, you might want to be silly. You might want to crack a joke here and there. You might want to find out that this life is to be enjoyed. Because when you take it too serious, why would I want to be here?

00;26;40;24 - 00;27;02;11

Eric Murphy

I got to make it uncomplicated. All the other stuff we got that basic, we had the basic and make sure you that you straight you're not gonna learn how to survive. You're going around that thrive. So I think the other part to it is, as we talked about, there's a simple framework that I utilize a lot of times is what do you want?

00;27;02;24 - 00;27;25;04

Eric Murphy

What are you doing? Evaluate that and come up with a plan simply w DP And this is a glasser technique from William Glasser. He's a therapist, a theorist I like, but it's like, What are you doing? What do you want? What would I want? I want to be happy. What are you doing about that? I'm on Facebook. I come home at quality time.

00;27;25;04 - 00;27;53;08

Eric Murphy

My partner. Are you talking to? You know who? Your ticket. My wife. Still taking care of Kate. How is that working for? You know, my wife says it's not. We're not doing anything different, really. Let's come up with a new plan B. The hardest part of the WD P framework is the doing because people like to minimize the things that they are doing that they know is detrimental to the overall goal.

00;27;53;08 - 00;28;10;12

Eric Murphy

Because within are doing you find out selfish. I would say using DP is a very hard thing to do. I think you do it individually and then you come together with it because I think if you do it together, then it becomes a tit for tat kind of a thing. I think you do it separately and then you process that together.

00;28;11;10 - 00;28;38;07

Eric Murphy

So if I was going to give you some tips, one of my first things I would tell you about somebody outside the circle, you know, talking to your mom who has never dealt with a child with a disability. And those people telling you first and foremost, if I have a child who has processing issues but they mask very well, grandma will say that may be capable.

00;28;38;26 - 00;29;10;19

Eric Murphy

You'll know she's our mother. Baby is going to handle problems. Grandmother to know that that baby is masking that their baby is mimicking and repeating everything you just said and you think that baby understand everything I'm talking about. But as a parent, you're sitting there like, No, I know my child's bell curve is 55. I know this. So I think a lot of times it is definitely explaining the diagnosis and maybe even explaining interventions that the professionals have shared with you that are helpful.

00;29;11;09 - 00;29;29;13

Eric Murphy

I think not hearing them make them pressed a little bit to make you hear them. So I think providing people with an opportunity to share their concern and your desire to be helpful and are you directing them and talking to out talking to them about how they can help? You know, definitely to have a partner, you train your partner how to treat you, your training, your family, how to treat you to.

00;29;29;13 - 00;29;57;28

Eric Murphy

Also, I will. The other part to it is I would tell you, I'm a firm believer in this with people with a child with a disability, get you a family counselor if you can get kid that. If you can get someone to help with that. Sometimes having someone outside of the circle to mediate the conversation because my partner might say something I've heard her say ten times or maybe 100 times, but then I hear the therapist say it a little differently.

00;29;58;08 - 00;30;21;29

Eric Murphy

I might ask. That's what my wife said to me, and I might be to take it a little differently. The other thing I might think of is there's a bunch of support groups out there. You have parent to parent, you have a circle of parents. I had one call teaching the effective system of effective parenting as a group.

00;30;21;29 - 00;30;43;17

Eric Murphy

We did also another groups from Get Into Find a Love languages presentation, find something to enhance your relationship. One of the things that I did with my wife that I thought, man, she would never enjoy this. I took her to dinner with a medium. A medium. Being a psychic now, it was crazy. But you know what that crazy did?

00;30;44;08 - 00;31;04;21

Eric Murphy

It gives you an opportunity not to think about what you do in the world, how and I'm not trying to tell you to avoid or deny what I'm saying to is fill your life up with heart and be in that moment and be in that moment with your partner. So is she a role model, what it is to demonstrate purposeful, appreciative, love to your child?

00;31;06;07 - 00;31;29;21

Eric Murphy

I'm going to make it happen. I'm going to have my interdependence with my partner and my child's going to see that and know that we are leaning to support you. Better yet, you to learn how to support yourself. You got to learn how to be independent. You learn how to find somebody that's interdependent with you. You're going to find someone who has love for you, unify somebody who sees you as the person, and then they're going to know what you deal with as a person.

00;31;29;22 - 00;32;07;23

Eric Murphy

They're not going to put that in front of you. You're going to be person center first. And I got to do that with my partner. I got to be Love Center first. When you have a child with a disability and you're in your marriage and you're both dealing with adversity and you're trying to make it happen, those things that you engage with your partner that excited you about the next challenge, you become an annoyance to you forget like I married a very alpha personality, but because my tank is depleted a little bit, because I'll be doing my stuff for my child, you come home and you're like, Well, let's do this thing.

00;32;08;08 - 00;32;38;10

Eric Murphy

And I'm like, Yo, I think it really comes down to open communication and understanding how we communicate. And I'm going to tell you guys how we communicate. There's six ways we communicate. Number one, facial expression. Number two, eye contact. Number three, body movement. Number four, body position number five is intonation. But as six of them touch that, the last one is touch.

00;32;39;13 - 00;32;55;03

Eric Murphy

When you understand that, you have to be conscious. Like I might say, I didn't deliver that message in a negative way, but you look crazy. Deliver the message and be congruent with all this stuff. So I think that one of the things about marriage, you got to be aware, nothing that I've gotten in my marriage has been easy.

00;32;55;15 - 00;33;21;21

Eric Murphy

Nothing. Nothing in my life that I've gotten has been easy. Nothing. So I don't think that parenting a child with complexities is going to be easy. Because ain't in your life easy like that. Nothing. Embrace it. We work together, we fall down. She picks me up, she falls out, I pick her up. Our child watches all of this.

00;33;21;21 - 00;33;40;01

Eric Murphy

I have never met perfect. I've never met normal is the acquisition of tools. And it happens through the journey. So if you start telling it, I am terrible, you're acting like you should have known better. Where did you learn it? Who taught you how to work with a child who has a disability? Who taught you how to love?

00;33;40;08 - 00;34;10;06

Eric Murphy

When you have a child that has many medical complexities, nobody touched you that this was trial and error. So you might want to know that you're imperfect. You might want to know that your child, that you think your child is special, you think you are special, you're not uniquely you. And putting effort into you is important. And I would say this at first I was unconsciously incompetent, and after 20 some years I am entering into consciously competent, entering into and I've been a psychotherapist for quite a few years.

00;34;10;27 - 00;34;29;16

Eric Murphy

So what I'm telling you is it's always going to be a journey of every time I hit something that got it, I'm in a new season. And what you do is you embrace that moment and you in that season, it comes down to being there and being present.

00;34;29;16 - 00;34;44;14

Host

Yes. So what about if someone in West Virginia is listening and they think that they could use some sessions with you? How would they do that? And then what? Who who would be eligible and how?

00;34;44;24 - 00;35;06;17

Eric Murphy

Got you. So say that you listen to this and say that this has struck you as something that man this seemed like somebody I could talk to. This seems like a valuable resource for me. What they would do is they would call the Center for Excellence and Disabilities and then they would set them up with appointments. For me, one appointment.

00;35;06;17 - 00;35;40;13

Eric Murphy

And then that appointment is an assessment appointment to see if they would like to do the services with me. And then we scheduled them for appointment. Who's eligible? Pretty much, I think. So how this goes in, how it's written is I work with people with disabilities on our campus and in the state of West Virginia. What I would tell you, if you're in acute distress, if you are in if you're dealing with something, if you've acquired a disability, if you're an aging population, I have been given the discretion to be supportive of our community.

00;35;41;12 - 00;36;03;07

Eric Murphy

People often ask how much of that cost it is free because we are a super land grant institution and our job is to bring the university to the community. Now, some people cannot make it to Morgantown and we can do virtual. If we cannot do virtual because you do not have a computer that allows you to see me or me to see you.

00;36;03;15 - 00;36;25;24

Eric Murphy

We could do it over the phone. Either way it goes. I care for. I have found that all these vehicles of communication have been effective as long as you are even willing to engage in the process. And one of the things about my therapeutic practice is I do not give my opinion too often. I give you theory and technique, but I will tell you a lot of times with some of my clients, it really bit about fellowship.

00;36;26;28 - 00;36;47;28

Eric Murphy

Somebody outside the circle that I could just say today was rough and then you go to your partner say I'm good, and he finally has somebody to talk to about it, so I'm willing to do this. So, you know, for anybody that listen to this, I am my most authentic self. I do not ask you to sound like me.

00;36;48;09 - 00;37;14;14

Eric Murphy

I'm not going to ask you to be anybody but yourself. I am one of those people who is honored to support my community, and I do that with skill and technique and a desire to be very courageous. So I got you.

00;37;14;14 - 00;37;30;03

Host

This podcast is sponsored by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Office, a maternal child and family health children with special health care needs program, and the West Virginia Family two Family Health Information Center and produced by the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities.